WHAT? *Why?* WHEN? HOW? WHERE? WHO?

THE BEARDMORE RELICS

HOAX OR HISTORY?

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A. D. TUSHINGHAM

Royal Ontario Museum / University of Toronto

I keep six honest serving-men

(They taught me all I knew);

Their names are WHAT *and* WHY *and* WHEN

And HOW *and* WHERE *and* WHO. RUDYARD KIPLING

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8 *Winifred Needler:* JEWELLERY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
9 *Walter M. Tovell:* NIAGARA FALLS: STORY OF A RIVER
10 *E. S. Rogers:* THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY OF THE IROQUOIS
11 *A. D. Tushingham:* THE BEARDMORE RELICS: HOAX OR HISTORY?
12 *L. S. Russell:* LIGHTING THE PIONEER ONTARIO HOME
13 *Gerald Stevens:* EARLY ONTARIO FURNITURE
14 *K. B. Brett:* WOMEN'S COSTUME IN ONTARIO (1867–1907)

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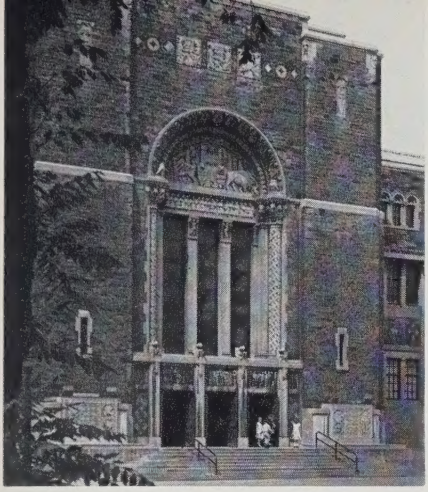
Quotation from THE JUST SO STORIES *by Rudyard Kipling, by permission of Mrs. George Bambridge and The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited*



WHAT? HOW?

Why? WHERE?

WHEN? WHO?

The Beardmore Relics: Hoax or History?

by A. D. TUSHINGHAM

WHAT are the Beardmore relics?

The Beardmore relics are either a practical joke—or a clue to one of the greatest adventures in Canadian history. Taken at face value, they tell a story 500 years older than Columbus, of a band of Viking rovers who sailed through Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay, on into northern Ontario and almost to the Lakehead. If the relics could be believed, they would provide the first concrete evidence that the Norsemen, who certainly founded settlements on the Atlantic coast, had penetrated into the interior of North America. But their discovery has been so clouded by discrepancy and disagreement that it is difficult today to consider them more than a hoax. Sifting the evidence is like following a detective story.

The Beardmore relics consist of three major objects, plus several small fragments. All are iron. The first object was obviously a sword. New, it may have been slightly more than a yard long, from point to hilt end; over the centuries, however, the blade has corroded at the tip and been broken in the centre. Two large portions are left, each about 15 inches long—one the hilt and upper blade, the other the lower blade—and three small fragments which may well have come from the missing central portion. Metallurgical analysis indicates that in its forging the blade was subjected to

quenching and tempering. From the style and metal the sword appears to be Norse, 900 to 1,000 years old.

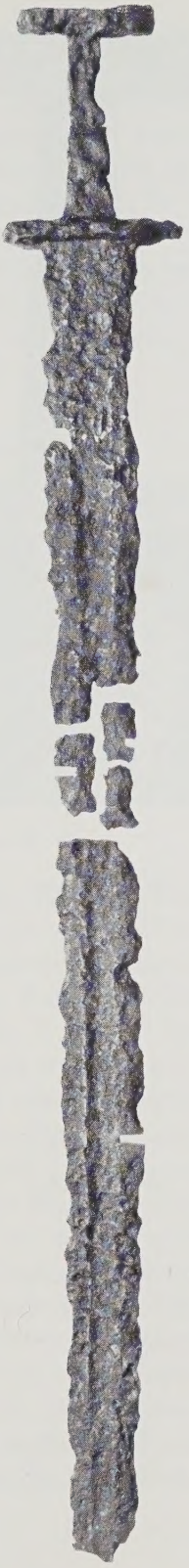
The second object is an axehead, typical of those used in Norway during the 10th century or slightly later. Metallurgical analysis indicates that it was made of wrought iron without subsequent treatment. The absence of a hard steel cutting edge is strange, but as it was probably welded to the wrought iron body of the axehead it may have corroded or broken away completely, leaving no trace.

The third object is far more difficult to identify. It is a flat iron bar, about 7¼ inches long, a little more than one inch at its greatest width, and about one-eighth of an inch thick. Round the edge of one face runs a flange. The other face is slightly rounded. The bar terminates at both ends in hooks which give an overall length of 9¼ inches. One hook curves towards the flanged side; probably it once extended beyond its present length, for there is a small fragment which looks as if it had been broken off recently. The other hook lies at right angles to the first, and at its outer end has an eyelet formed by bending the metal back on itself. Metallurgical evidence suggests that the metal was bent in this pattern in ancient times—that the hooks are not the result of some modern distortion. The material is wrought iron, with no trace of hardening.

This object was first thought to be the handle of a shield. The Norse shield was round and made of wood, perhaps overlaid with leather. At its centre a bowl-shaped metal boss protruded outwards, protecting the warrior's fist as he grasped the handle on the inside. The whole was held together by iron rivets. Over the centuries the wood of most shields has rotted away, but the iron parts may endure. The man who found the Beardmore relics reported that over the bar-like object he found "a dome of rust, slightly flat, about size of goose-egg". In other words, what might well have been the remains of a boss.

An alternative theory is that the bar was part of a *rangel*, or rattle—an object frequently found in Viking graves along with weapons. These rattles were something like overgrown safety pins, formed from an iron strip. On them were strung a number of iron rings or other small objects, which rattled together and (according to the magic theories of the day) kept away

The Beardmore sword, corroded by the centuries—a tantalizing mystery. How did it reach northern Ontario? Did some long-dead Viking explorer carry it on an expedition from Hudson Bay? Or was it brought from Norway in modern times and used deliberately in a hoax? In this photograph, three small fragments which seem to be part of the sword have been placed where they possibly fitted, though their original position is unknown. The saw cuts into the blade were made to obtain samples for metallurgical analysis.



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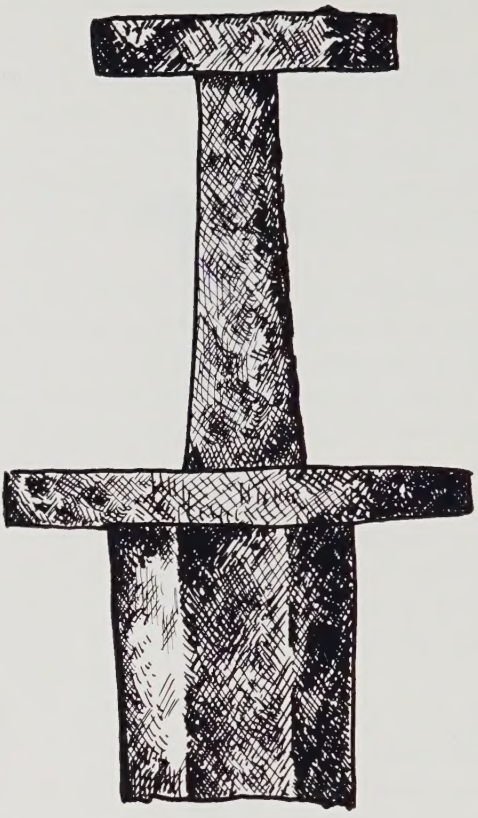


When it was
newly
forged
more
than
a thousand
years ago,
the sword's
hilt
probably
looked
like this.
(After
Petersen)

•

evil spirits. *Rangels* were attached to sleigh harness in much the same way as sleighbells were used in Canada.

It is hard to believe that our mystery-object was one of these. The massiveness of the bar, and particularly the flange around its edge, suggest that it was a handle of some kind. The flange in that case would have held a piece of wood (the grip) which would be bound to the bar with cord or leather strips. If there were no hooks, and the ends were straight, it could easily have been fitted to a shield. If the hooks were set in line, it might have been attached to a bucket or similar object. But the peculiar configuration of the hooks still leave its purpose a puzzle.

WHEN were the relics made?

There is no reason to doubt that the three objects—the sword, the axe, and the iron bar (whatever it may be)—are genuine. Their ages, however, apparently differ. Dr. Johannes Brøndsted, former director of the National Museum in Copenhagen, has suggested that the sword is an East Norwegian type made between the years 850 and 950, while the axe is later, from about 950–1025. In a letter to the Museum he added, "This combination: *this* sword together with *this* axe is unusual but not at all impossible. This Beardmore Viking has had his own axe and his father's sword!"

WHERE were they found?

If we can believe the man who sold them to the Museum, these relics of the Viking rovers were uncovered by a million-to-one chance in the rocky wilderness north of Lake Superior. Their name comes from the town of Beardmore, on the Canadian National Railway line east of Lake Nipigon. The actual point of discovery is said to be three miles southwest of the town, and about a quarter mile south of the Blackwater River. If the story is true, we are faced with an astounding fact: that nearly 1,000 years ago a Norseman was in the region of the Upper Lakes.

We know that the Norse were a wide-ranging group. Sailing fearlessly from the Norwegian fjords in their small but seaworthy open boats, they reached and colonized Iceland about 1,100 years ago. Some founded a settlement on the coast of Greenland around 985, and shortly afterwards Leif Ericson reached North America. Here, beginning about 1000, they tried to establish small settlements, particularly in the area they called Vinland. Some colonies may have lasted at least until early in the 12th century.

But where was Vinland, the land of wild grapes and grain? There have been two main currents of thought on this subject: that it was either around Cape Cod, or further north in the Canadian Maritimes. While the grape no

The Beardmore axehead, as it looks today. What remains is of wrought iron, but it is possible that a hard steel cutting edge was welded onto the blade and has corroded or broken away.

longer flourishes in these areas, there is evidence that then the climate was much warmer.

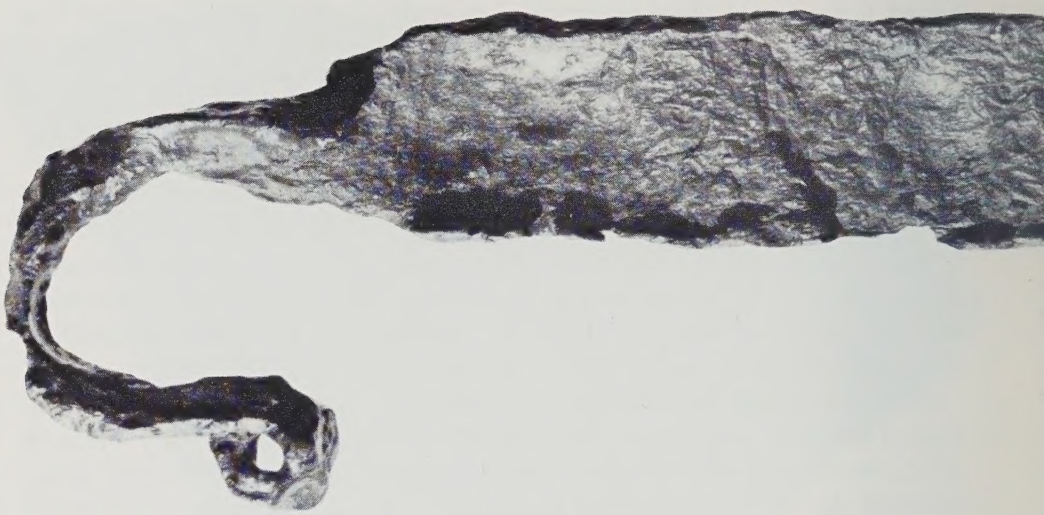
After the discovery of the Beardmore weapons a third view was put forward, mainly by J. W. Curran, editor of the Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, *Star*. In many newspaper articles, and finally in a book, *Here Was Vinland*, he placed Vinland around the Upper Great Lakes. Curran supported his theory with the Beardmore find and an earlier, equally controversial, discovery at Kensington, Minnesota, of a stone carved with ancient Scandinavian rune marks and bearing the date 1362. The authenticity of this stone was defended for some 60 years by the late Hjalmar Rued Holand of Ephraim, Wisconsin.

Recent research appears to have settled the question of Vinland's location. The long-lost Vinland Map, published by Yale University Press in 1965, seems definitely to prove that the colony lay on the Atlantic coast, although in which part is not completely clear. Moreover, excavations carried out by Dr. Helge and Anne Stine Ingstad at L'Anse au Meadow, on the northern tip of Newfoundland, have laid open the remains of a settlement which is definitely not Indian, Eskimo or Colonial, and may well date from the 10th century. We may, therefore, seek Vinland in Newfoundland. As for the Kensington Stone, it has been discredited by the careful investigation of Erik Wahlgren and must be regarded as a modern forgery —as it has always been considered by responsible scholars.

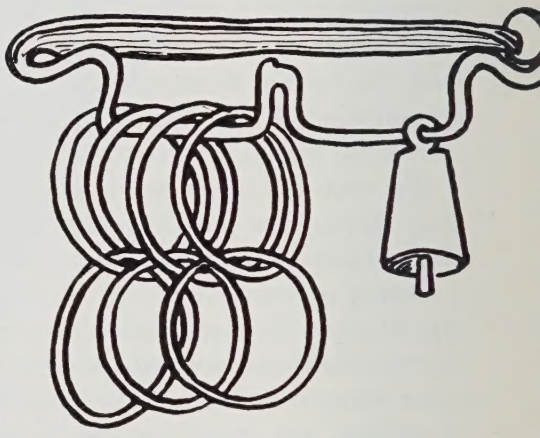
But even if Curran was wrong in his belief about Vinland, we cannot deny thereby the possibility that at least one party did find its way to the Upper Lakes. That would indeed have made a saga to be told many times— a journey of some 2,000 miles from Greenland west through Hudson Strait into Hudson Bay, southward into James Bay, then up the Albany River and its tributaries, portaging around rapids and over the height of land into Lake Nipigon and so to Lake Superior. Possibility is one thing; but proof is another, and proof that the Norsemen actually reached the interior of North America in the late 10th or early 11th centuries rests entirely on the evidence of the Beardmore find. Hence the importance of these rusted old pieces of iron, and of the facts surrounding them.

WHO found these objects?

The case rests ultimately on the credibility of James Edward Dodd, of Port Arthur, a trainman on the Canadian National Railway. Like many other people in that neighbourhood, Dodd used to spend his spare time prospecting for gold. It was during one of these trips into the bush that he allegedly found the relics. When the Royal Ontario Museum bought his objects, on December 3, 1936, Dodd made a statement to this effect:

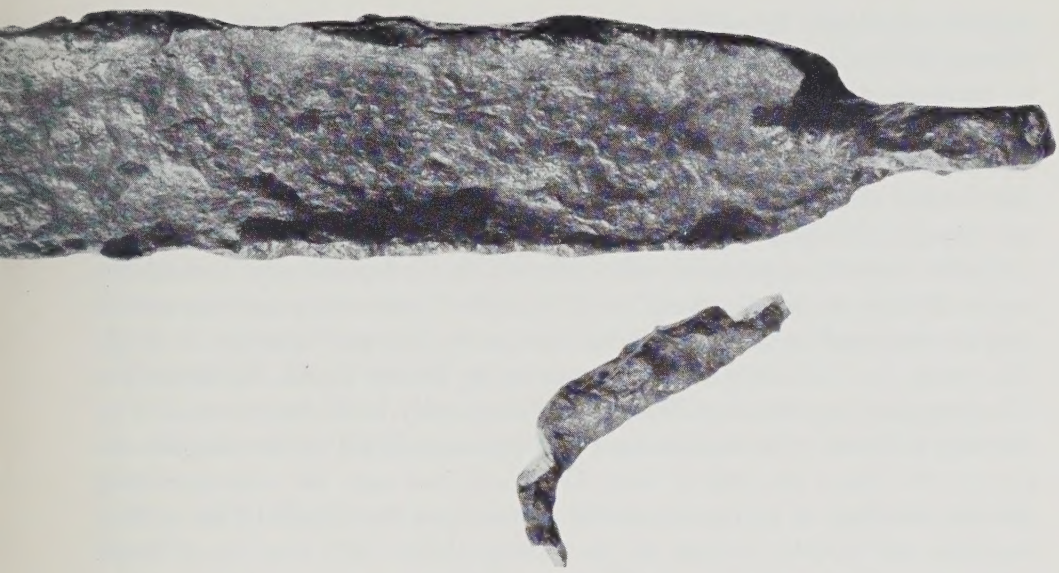


ABOVE *An enigma within the mystery: What purpose did this peculiarly-shaped metal bar once serve? Some scholars think it was a handle, perhaps attached to a shield. Others suggest it was part of a* rangel, *or rattle, which the Vikings believed would keep away evil spirits.* RIGHT Rangels *came in many shapes. This type had a heavy crossbar somewhat similar to the Beardmore mystery object. (After Petersen)*



He had been sampling an exposed, nearly vertical quartz vein on a claim near Beardmore on May 24, 1931. Where the vein ran into the ground there stood a clump of birch, consisting of one old tree that had died and a group of young trees sprung from the roots. To save cutting through that tangled mass, Dodd decided to use dynamite. Roots and all were blown over by the blast, and about 3½ feet of overlay was dislodged, exposing rock. On the rock lay some rusty pieces of iron. Dodd was after richer metal—and threw them to one side. There they lay, on the surface of the ground, until 1933, when he carried them home to Port Arthur.

Eventually word of the find reached C. T. Currelly, director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology. He invited Dodd to bring the weapons to the Museum. As Dr. Currelly described the meeting some years later:



"It was obvious to me that the weapons were a set, that is, that the axe and the sword were of the same date, which I judged to be about A.D. 1000. I asked Mr. Dodd if he had found anything else, as I knew that there should have been another piece. He said yes, that lying over the bar of metal was something like a bowl that was rusted into little fragments. He had just shovelled them out. This bit of evidence was as it should have been, and since no one unacquainted with Viking things would have known of this iron boss that covered the hand on the Viking shield, I felt, therefore, that there was no question that these things had been found as was described."

Nevertheless, Dr. Currelly asked Professor T. F. McIlwraith of the University of Toronto, an Indian archaeologist of much experience, to check the story. McIlwraith visited the site of the alleged discovery with Dodd in September 1937. In his official report afterwards he supported Dodd's description of the physical features of the find, although dynamiting and trenching carried out in the intervening years had made it impossible to check all details. He concluded, "I believe the facts to be substantially as reported by him."

Dodd's story was supported by John Drew Jacob, who at the time of discovery was overseer in the Beardmore district for the Ontario Fish and Game Department. On December 9, 1936, he made a formal statement that he had visited the site soon after the weapons had been discovered and had seen there, imprinted in the rock, the rust stain left by the iron sword.

Six months later Jacob amplified his original statement. He explained

that he had heard through an acquaintance of Dodd's find, had seen the objects in Port Arthur, had checked in reference books and identified them as Norse weapons, and had then visited the site himself. In both these statements Jacob assumed the date of the discovery to be 1931, as Dodd had said. Soon afterwards, however, he checked in his diary and found that he had visited the site and seen the rust impression between June 17 and June 21, 1930.

Dodd himself, apparently soon afterwards, independently revised his account to place the discovery in 1930 rather than 1931, and the earlier date is contained in a formal affidavit sworn by him on February 3, 1939. The same day, affidavits also were sworn by Walter Dodd, his foster-son ("I have read my father's affidavit, and can testify to its correctness"); by William Feltham, who said he had accompanied Dodd to the alleged discovery site about the end of May 1930 and had seen the objects resting "on the banking of earth around the cabin"; and by Fletcher Gill, a railwayman and Dodd's partner on the mining claims. Gill was not on hand at the time of the discovery but said he had a letter from Dodd in the summer of 1931 about finding an "old Indian cemetery".

In his 1939 affidavit, Dodd also stated (1) that P. J. Bohun, CNR section man at nearby Dorion, had seen the relics at the cabin on the claim, and that (2) subsequently in May or June, 1930, he, Dodd, had taken them to his home at 296 Wilson Street in Port Arthur. Four days later Bohun made a sworn statement that he was foreman at Warnford, one mile from Dodd's camp, that he used to visit Dodd there, and that on "one of these visits—between the 15th of May and the 1st of July, 1931—(I take these dates from staff records, which show that I was stationed at Warnford between these dates)—I saw the handle part of the sword . . . lying on the ground outside on the left hand side (south side) of Dodd's camp." Three other Port Arthur residents made sworn statements supporting Dodd's statement that he had the relics at his home on Wilson Street; and a fourth swore that Dodd had possession of the weapons before he moved from Wilson Street.

The matter of Dodd's residence became increasingly important as the story unfolded. During this period Dodd lived in three different houses in Port Arthur. The first was at 296 Wilson Street. On June 29, 1931, he moved to 37 Machar Avenue. There his landlord was J. M. Hansen (we shall hear more of him) who lived next door at 33 Machar Avenue. After only a few months, on September 18, 1931, Hansen moved out of 33 Machar Avenue and Dodd moved in. He remained there until March 9, 1933, when he moved yet again to 74 South Algoma Street.

It is obvious that Dodd's statements and those which tend to support it in substance are full of discrepancies in detail, especially in the matter of dates. Dodd originally told Currelly in 1936 that he had discovered the weapons in 1931 and had left them on his mining claim until 1933. In his

later statements he pushed the date back to 1930 and said he had taken them home to Wilson Street during May or June of the same year. Certainly, if he brought them to Wilson Street it must have been before the end of June 1931.

These discrepancies would in themselves raise some doubts about the veracity of statements made by Dodd and some other witnesses. But in the absence of other evidence the story, with some misgivings, could be accepted. There was no clear factual or testimonial evidence to disprove its essential features—that Dodd had found the Norse weapons while blasting on his mining claim and after some time had brought them to his home in Port Arthur, where several people saw them. Besides,

† How else could Dodd have acquired genuine Norse relics? He apparently did not know what they were, and had made no effort to profit from their discovery.

† Why would Dodd have spoken of a "dome of rust" if he had not actually seen it?

† Why would Jacob, a reputable man well known to the Museum, have supported Dodd's claim so strongly before there was any newspaper publicity about it, if he had not actually seen the rust impression of the sword? It is difficult to believe in collusion between him and Dodd.

By such reasoning, Currelly came to believe that Dodd's story was in fact essentially true, and the Beardmore relics were proudly put on display in the Royal Ontario Museum.

Why then is there still doubt?

Little publicity attended the ROM's purchase of the weapons. Then on January 27, 1938, the Winnipeg *Free Press* carried an interview with Eli Ragotte, another CNR trainman. Ragotte claimed to have discovered the rusty sword as early as 1928—in a pile of ashes in the basement of Dodd's Port Arthur home.

In a formal statement the following day, Ragotte swore that

> BETWEEN THE YEARS 1929 AND 1930, I LIVED IN A HOUSE ON Wilson Street, in the City of Port Arthur in the Province of Ontario, the number of which I have forgotten. The premises were owned by a Mr. J. M. Hansen, a Contractor of Port Arthur, and were rented to a Mr. James E. Dodds, who was my landlord. That Mr. Hansen told me that he had left various articles in and on the said premises which he had rented to Mr. Dodds. That sometime during the years 1928 and 1930, while assisting Mr. Dodds in cleaning up the premises on the said Wilson Street, I found an old rusty sword, in the basement. That about six weeks after finding the said sword Mr. Dodds told me that he had blasted it out of his Mineral Claim situated one mile East of Warnford, Ontario, which

was known as the Middle Claim. That Mr. Dodds told me that he had not only found the said sword on his claim, but had also found a shield and an axe. That I never saw the axe, but was shown a rusted piece of steel which Mr. Dodds told me was a shield. . . . That the sword which I found in the basement of the premises on Wilson Street in the City of Port Arthur, is the same one which Mr. Dodds was showing around the City of Port Arthur, and claiming that he had blasted the same out of his Claim at Warnford, Ontario.

This statement contained at least one obvious and important error. The house on Wilson Street was not owned by Hansen, and Dodd never occupied any residence owned by Hansen before June 1931. Later Ragotte said the incident had occurred at 33 Machar Avenue, but still gave the date as 1929 or 1930. This discrepancy may be credited to confusion in Ragotte's mind, arising from the fact that some years had passed and he had roomed with Dodd in both houses.

On January 29, the contractor Hansen entered the mystery in person. He too made a notarized statement. In it he swore that he had owned a set of Viking relics, obtained from a Lieutenant Bloch in payment of a $25 debt; that he had stored the relics in the basement of 33 Machar Avenue; that while Dodd was living there he, Hansen, had discovered the relics were missing; and that the relics answered in general to the description of those reportedly found by Dodd on his mining claim.

Jens Petter Blanchenberg Bloch (known in Port Arthur as Lieutenant Bloch or John Bloch) was the son of Andreas Bloch, a noted Norwegian painter and designer whose special interests were heraldry and military history. The elder Bloch knew a great deal about ancient weapons and costumes, including those of the Viking period. His son, after spending one year in a military academy in Norway, emigrated to Canada in 1923 and arrived in Port Arthur two years later. He was an educated man and had many friends among the people of Norwegian background there. In 1928 he worked for a time for Hansen. Later he moved to Winnipeg and finally to Vancouver, where he died on October 30, 1936, before the relics were purchased by the ROM.

In 1928, according to a statement from the Port Arthur branch of the Imperial Bank of Canada, Bloch did owe Hansen $35. How the debt was settled is unknown. Nor is it known definitely that Bloch ever owned a set of Viking weapons. His friends, including the local Norwegian vice-consul, C. Sorenson, testified that to their knowledge he did not. However, Norwegian law forbade the export of antiquities without a special permit, and it is possible that Bloch would never mention owning such objects to his countrymen—in particular to the vice-consul. His widow, whom he had married only after leaving Port Arthur, said he often talked of recovering them.

Two private letters from Hansen are in the files. In one, he described

Dodd as (to put it politely) a man with a reputation for untruthfulness. In the other, mailed to Ragotte a few days after the *Free Press* interview appeared, he wrote:

THANKING YOU FOR ADVISING THE MANITOBA FREE PRESS RE my relic there was at 33 Machar Ave. . . . As you were speaking that the relics were among the clinkers I kinda remember that I was down at 33 Machar looking for my fishing takles that I lost and Dodds went down the basement to look for them and I went down and you came also then I asked for my norse relics you remember the bench they were standing left along the east wall in the basement and Dodds said he saw some old iron and junk that he threw amongst the clinkers that was left in the basement at the time and you went over and rooted amongst the ashes and found some of them and you remember also that I told Dodds to get them up and put oil on them as I had did which he promised. As I several calls to make that night and you both promised me to get them out for me. . . . According to what I found out last night the relics was sold to the Royal Museum by Dodds? Of course the fishing takle and rod that he claims you have I suppose are lost. You don't remember what became of the grine stone that was standing in the back. The frame was left but the stone and handle were gone. . . . Thanking you again for the stand you are taking as I almost forgot it until I saw about these relics and you couldn't help me thinking that they must be mine.

Had Dodd simply purloined the relics from the basement on Machar Avenue and used them to "salt" his claim for a phony tale? According to Ragotte and Hansen, that appeared to be the case. Yet if they were telling the truth Dodd could not have obtained the objects until after he moved to 33 Machar Avenue in September 1931. How then can we explain the affidavits which swear to seeing them in his possession a year earlier?

There matters stood briefly. And then, two months after starting the controversy, Ragotte swore an affidavit which said in effect, "I have just been joking!" Still later, after seeing the actual relics in the Royal Ontario Museum both Ragotte and Hansen on separate occasions said they were not the ones that had been in the Machar Avenue cellar. Nevertheless, their earlier stories left a permanent cloud over the Beardmore relics.

HOW could the problem be solved?

For many years the weapons held a place of honour in the Museum galleries. The official position was cautious, for there was no absolute proof in either direction. This did not prevent the weapons' being mentioned repeatedly in publications of all kinds (including textbooks) as evidence that the Norsemen had indeed penetrated the Upper Great Lakes region almost 1,000 years ago.

Many people felt the Museum was laying itself open to serious charges

of dereliction of duty by continuing to display the objects, unless it could prove beyond doubt that they constituted valid evidence for the theories based upon them. As a result the ROM re-opened the case officially in November 1956. To absolve itself from any suggestion of bias, and to make the new enquiry known publicly, it asked the Toronto *Globe & Mail* to assign an experienced reporter who would assess all the known data and seek new evidence. To this reporter, Robert L. Gowe, the Museum opened all its files. The first of five articles by him appeared in the newspaper on November 23, 1956. Subsequently the controversy was reported by *Maclean's* magazine in the issue of April 13, 1957.

By this time most of the people connected with the case were dead. Surprisingly, Gowe's enquiry still produced new facts—among them the most sensational statement since the discovery itself. On the day that his first article was printed, the Museum received a telephone call from a man who said he had something he wished to tell about the Beardmore relics. The man turned out to be Walter Dodd, foster-son of James Edward Dodd, who had sworn in 1939 to the full correctness of his father's story. Walter Dodd came to the Museum and after long conversations which were tape-recorded, he made a new sworn statement dated November 28, 1956:

I, WALTER DODD, ADOPTED SON OF THE LATE JAMES EDWARD Dodd, formerly of Port Arthur, Ontario, make oath and say:

That I was 12 or 13 years of age in 1930 or 1931 (the time of the reputed find). That my stepfather found in the basement of the house we then lived in, at 33 Machar Street, Port Arthur, some rusty pieces of metal. I remember that there was a short bar that could be held in the hand, cigar-like in shape, a sword broken in two pieces, and an axe head much like a hatchet. I don't remember that there was anything else.

That one weekend I went with my stepfather from Port Arthur to Beardmore. We arrived in the middle of the night and spent the night in his cabin, and in the morning I went with him out to his claim. My stepfather had the iron pieces with him. He laid them on the ground at a spot where he had been blasting some time before. I don't remember much about the spot, but should say that it was more like a hill than flat land or a hollow. I do not remember anything else that happened that day.

That we returned to Port Arthur without the weapons, and that later on—I do not remember how long after, but it may have been months, certainly not years later—my stepfather made a trip to the claim by himself and brought back the weapons, and upon his return told the story that he had found the weapons when blasting. I do not know whom he told it to, but the story was spread about in the papers. He kept the weapons wrapped in brown paper in his bedroom, and brought them out to show people when they came to visit. He did not know what they were, just said they were old swords he found while blasting. Hansen made a statement that got into the papers that the weapons belonged to him. I believe his story was that Bloch had given the weapons to Hansen and Hansen had left them in the basement at 33 Machar Street. It was some time after that I was forced to sign an affidavit saying that I had been present when my stepfather discovered the weapons at his claim near Beardmore. I signed the affidavit, and

have since then seen it in a printed book. As to Eli Ragotte, I remember only that he boarded in my stepfather's house, that there was a dispute of some kind, and that he moved away.

I have never been easy in my mind about having signed an affidavit intended to prove what I knew was not the truth, and I hereby declare that I have now come to the Royal Ontario Museum of my own free will to revoke the statements contained in the affidavit made earlier by me under pressure, and that the above statement is a true statement of the facts as I know them concerning the weapons known as the Beardmore find.

Does this settle the question once and for all?

Not necessarily. James Dodd's widow held the opinion that her foster-son's second affidavit had been made—not from any love for the truth or a guilty conscience—but simply out of spite. He had disliked his adopted father, and had taken this method of revenge.

One final statement remains. It was volunteered by Carey Marshman Brooks, a retired prospector, in Fort William on November 30, 1956. It too calls the Beardmore relics a deliberate hoax; but here again we meet the familiar confusion about the house address, for Brooks swore to events happening at Wilson Street which could have occurred only on Machar Avenue. His sworn statement reads in part:

I HAVE BEEN LIVING IN THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY FOR over 30 years, during most of which time I was a resident of Beardmore, Ont. . . . I was well acquainted with the late James Edward Dodd, and prior to the year 1931, I one day visited him at his home on Wilson Street in the City of Port Arthur. At that time he mentioned to me that he had discovered some Norse Relics lying among some ashes in the basement of his house and that he believed they had been left in his house by a Norwegian who had rented a room in the house when it was in the possession of a previous tenant. I did not ask to examine these Relics. . . . Several months later, when it did come to my attention that Mr. Dodd was making statements to the effect that he had found Norse Relics on his "Middle Claim" at Beardmore, I mentioned to him that he had told me that he had found the said Relics in the basement of his house on Wilson Street, he replied "Oh well, they have been found at Beardmore now," and refused to discuss the matter further. The "Middle Claim" in which Mr. Dodd alleged he had found the Relics, was actually trenched and dynamited by myself, and it was I who dug the trench in which Mr. Dodd claimed to have discovered the Relics. This work was done by me during the start of the depression period in 1930 and 1931, when I was hired for some time by Mr. Dodd. My own claim was adjacent to the said "Middle Claim" of Mr. Dodd. In my opinion, it would have been impossible for Mr. Dodd to discover any Relics on the said Claim without my knowledge. I did at no time see any evidence of the discovery, nor did I see the rust marks of a piece of buried iron on a rock at the Claim, as later described by Dodd.

And that, at the time of writing, is where the matter still stands.

The weapons unquestionably are genuine Norse relics of about A.D. 1000. But did James Dodd really discover them, as he repeatedly said, under a

tangled clump of birch roots on his isolated mining claim? Dr. Currelly retired in 1947, certain still that the story was true. In his autobiography, written before the later disclosures, he dismissed criticism with the comment that "all the fuss in the newspapers came from the statements of a drunken brakeman and a cellar owner of more than doubtful honesty."

In the light of the affidavits sworn by Ragotte, Hansen, Walter Dodd and Brooks, few scholars today are prepared to accept James Dodd's version of the facts without further supporting evidence. Yet even those statements which brand the discovery a hoax are themselves stained with discrepancy. Ragotte discredited his own testimony. In that of the others we meet confusion about houses and dates. If it was a hoax, then apparently it could not have occurred before Dodd moved into 33 Machar Avenue in September 1931. But by that time both Jacob and Bohun had seen the weapons on his claim, according to their sworn statements allegedly supported by diary or staff records. Jacob's statement in particular about seeing rust stains on the rock in 1930 demands special explanation. Nor are we any closer to understanding why Dodd would have carried out such a hoax. He made no direct moves to gain publicity or profit thereby, and it was only through the intervention of a Kingston school teacher, O. C. Elliott, that the Museum learned of the find at all.

In the last analysis, it is impossible to explain all the discrepancies satisfactorily. The statements containing them were, in most cases, made at least five years after the event. Moreover, the prolific writing of Hjalmar Holand had persuaded many people in the Canadian and U.S. mid-west that their area had indeed been visited by the Vikings long before Columbus sailed the Atlantic. Holand's theories aroused such strong feeling, particularly among persons of Norwegian descent, that Hansen was attacked from all sides for daring to undermine the evidence which appeared to support it. In this atmosphere of belief, and desire to believe, the tangled web of evidence surrounding Dodd's alleged discovery is very easy to understand.

At present the Beardmore relics lie in storage at the Royal Ontario Museum, in that particular limbo reserved for objects of uncertain history. From the evidence, circumstantial as much of it is, opinion leans towards the view that their "discovery" was a hoax. This does not deny the possibility that Norsemen did reach the central area of North America. Perhaps some day unequivocal evidence will be uncovered to support that theory. At present, there is none.

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